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ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of community college programs has at least seven implications for community college speech programs and speech instructors. (1) Since most community colleges are open-door institutions, many students are coming to these institutions ill-equipped to handle the oral and listening requirements of academic life, necessitating course work below the basic speech course offering. (2) Noncredit speech communication courses must be developed to supplement the academic offerings. (3) Programs developing particular communication skills will be needed to meet the needs of specific groups within the community. (4) Instructors should evaluate realistically the types of communication skills that their students will need in social and career settings. (5) More two-year college instructors of speech communication should be involved in community-based consulting. (6) A national effort should be undertaken to ascertain what types of speech programs should be developed at the two-year-college level. (7) Community colleges tend to be conservative in their course offerings, while the expansion of course offerings is the best way to stimulate interest in a field; so speech communication teachers need to take advantage of the trend for specific courses for special people and make that trend a much more dynamic movement. (RL)

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SPEECH COMMUNICATION INSTRUCTION IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES: FUTURE PERSPECTIVES AND PRESENT-DAY APPLICATION

by

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(1) Speech Communication--A Community College Perspective

(2) An Experiential Approach to the Basic Course in a Large Community College

SPEECH COMMUNICATION--A COMMUNITY COLLEGE PERSPECTIVE

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Community colleges are a uniqueness on the American education scene. While many four-year schools are out searching for students, and others are seeing a drop in populations, or even a leveling-off, the community colleges continue to grow. Even with the populations in secondary schools on the decline, the community colleges, by drawing on populations other than just recent high school graduates, are expanding.

This is the present condition. What about the future? Why is this phenomenon taking place? What is unique about the community college that allows for a trend other than the norm? It is the purpose of this short position paper to explain the author's feelings and observations concerning, "The Speech Communication Programs at Community Colleges in the 1980's"

Community Colleges, because they are low-cost; offer both college-parallel (the first two years of the traditional four-year college or university programs), as well as technical programs; are located in areas where individuals can work and attend school; offer special interest and non-credit courses; find themselves in a unique position in American education. There appears to be no reason to believe that the trend will change. In fact, if anything, there should be expanded growth.

Besides the traditional just-out-of-high school students, post-secondary institutions are drawing from new population sources: women

wishing to be trained to enter the job market due to economic conditions, the growth of female independence, and boredom with the world of being a housewife/mother; individuals needing new training or advanced training based on new techniques, such as computer invasion of previous semi-skilled workers and occupations; new licensing requirements (real estate, health careers, para-professional certification); early retirees looking for another career; uppermobility of lower socio-economic individuals; minorities who feel they now might have a chance to enter the job market. This population supply appears to be ever-expanding, based on the marketing job done by the individual community colleges.

What effect will this have on community college speech programs? I would speculate the "needs and necessities of the 1980's" to be:

1. Since most community colleges are open-door institutions (any student may enter with no academic restrictions) many students are coming to the institutions ill-equipped to handle the oral and listening requirements of academic life. It would seem, therefore, that course work below the basic course offering will be needed. The number of developmental courses are on the up-swing. Based on the excellent work of Barbara Strain and Pat Wysong (San Antonio Community College) and supplemented by Maria Miller (Jefferson Community College, Louisville, Kentucky), and Roy Berko/Fran Bostwick/Barbara Finegan (Lorain County Community College, Elyria, Ohio) the programs are being developed. Realistically, most urban colleges and many rural community colleges must face the problem of getting students who simply cannot "cut it" and who drop out, or never reach their potential due to the lack of developmental, remedial, or supplemental training they must have, but is not offered.

2. Non-credit courses must and should be developed to supplement the academic offerings. With more people with leisure time available there is a need to fill those hours. Such courses as a practicum in humanities (where the students attend aesthetic offerings such as plays, musicals, concerts, and then discuss them); drama productions which allow for community participation; interpersonal communications courses; workshops in such topical areas as self-awareness, assertiveness training, and attitude assessments; and public speaking classes. All of these can be developed for students not interested in receiving credit, but wishing to fill in their time with meaningful activities.
3. Development of specific programs to fit the needs of specific groups within the community. Working with local businesses, industries, hospitals, social service institutions for training their people in specific communication skills: group discussion, leadership, public speaking, stress communications, nonverbal communications. All of these areas specifically geared for a particular group and presented either on the college campus or on-site at the organization.
4. A realistic evaluation of the types of skills which students need in social and career settings. Examining the field of communications and ascertaining exactly what skills a student is going to need in order to be successful in a collegiate atmosphere, and then in the world of work, as well as the skills needed to live a meaningful life while developing various types of relationships (friendship, marriage/living together, family). The speech program should reflect these needs, especially in the basic course which

is the one that most students take; unfortunately, the only communications course they take. It is my belief that, unfortunately, many instructors are jumping on the "return to basics movement" and are interpreting that to mean a return to public speaking, exclusively. It is my opinion that a balance of how to structure communicative messages (whether for a public speech or an interpersonal interaction), listening skills, an introduction to interpersonal communications concepts (relationship development and endings), a general knowledge of the operation of the group process, and understanding of the language we use (verbal and nonverbal contexts), will at least give a student the basis for building an understanding of the communicative act and contexts in which he/she will be operating and has been operating.

5. Community College instructors, because of their close ties to the area in which they are located, more and more two-year instructors of speech communication should be involved in community based consulting. This can and will only happen if the faculty members let it be known that they have the expertise to fulfill the consulting function and actively pursue opportunities. Presently, THE word is communications. Two-year college people could do themselves and their communities a great service by becoming more active in the pursuit of aiding others to be more effective communicators in such settings as industry, health career agencies, and social service agencies.
6. A study conducted by this author of 250 community colleges revealed that only 36% of the institutions offered a two-year degree program in communications, with 10.2% offering two-year technical degree

programs. Specific speech oriented two-year programs included work in multi-media, broadcasting, applied theatre arts, broadcast engineering technology, visual arts, theatre arts, and speech communications.

At a follow-up Action Caucus, held at the Speech Communication Association Convention in 1977 it was revealed that several institutions were proposing degree programs in sign language. Such programs have now been developed and appear to be satisfying a much needed service in the communities in which the sponsoring colleges are located.

An effort should be undertaken by SCA and the Community College Section of SCA to ascertain what types of speech programs should be developed that would fit into a two year time allocation and effort should be made to develop a curriculum that could implement the carrying out of these programs.

7. Community colleges tend to be conservative in their course offerings. Surveys indicate that most offer a single basic course. Some offer an additional course in interpersonal communications or specialized offerings (Business and Organizational Speaking, Speech for Technicians, Speech for Nurses). Personal experience has found that the more courses that are offered, the more interest grows in the entire field, and the more demand there is for additional courses and additional sections. I cannot realistically see where community colleges, as a whole, are going to greatly expand their offerings unless the present trend for specific courses for special people becomes a much more dynamic movement (e.g., Interpersonal Communications for Health Careers, Business and

Organizational Speaking, Interviewing).

A much clearer picture of the entire situation should be forthcoming when the follow-up is held to the Denver Conference on Communications in the Community College. The conference is now in the planning stages and will take place July 9-12, 1981, at the El Pomar Retreat Center, Colorado Springs, Colorado. At that time, an investigation will be made of the recommendations put forth in Denver, six years ago, and predictions and projections into the future will be made. (A summary of the Denver Conference may be obtained from the Association for Communication Administration, 5105 Backlick Road, Annandale, Virginia 22003. It appears on the ACA Bulletin, Issue 17, August, 1976.)

The community college is a unique institution and the speech programs within these institutions can do much to reach out and serve the various factions within the community in which they are located. They are already doing this in many places, but with special effort, even more can and will be accomplished.

"AN EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH TO THE BASIC COURSE IN A LARGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE" by Roy M. Berko, Lorain County Community College, Elyria, Ohio

Lorain County Community College is located in the center of the industrial-rural center, forty miles west of Cleveland, Ohio. The college has a student population of 6000 students. All of the students commute. The college, which is 16 years old, is located on a large, tree-covered campus. The facility was awarded the National Achitecture award several years ago. The institution has an open-door policy, admitting anyone who wishes to apply, with certain programs (nursing, for example) having an entrance requirement. The average age of the student body is 27 yaars of age, with about half the student body in day classes, the rest in evening and weekend courses.

The Communication and Performing Arts program is part of the Language and Humanities Division. Course offerings in C&PA include speech communications, radio-tv, drama, and film. There are three full-time instructors, plus two instructors in the English program who have drama and film degrees who teach some of the courses. In addition, there are seven part-time faculty. The program now offers twenty courses in excellent facilities. Specially designed speech classrooms (with remote control video tape recording units), playback rooms, a full-color television studio of professional quality, and a new 8½ million dollar Fine Arts building are used by the program.

The college offers Associate of Arts degrees, but there is no specific major in communications. Students may, however, follow course of study guides in completing their associate degree requirements. Course guides are available in the areas of speech communications, radio-tv performance, radio-tv technical, drama, speech/drama

education.

The basic course services about 750 students yearly. It is required for business, nursing, police science, x-ray technology, education, and real estate majors. In addition, it is strongly recommended by the counselors for almost all students. Only the number of faculty and part-time instructors available, limit the number of sections offered.

The objectives of basic course is the assumption that, "You are what you communicate." Stress is placed on self-concept, preparation and presentation of communication, group participation, and sending-receiving skills. Units included in the course area: Communication Theory and Models, Public Communications, Small Groups, Verbal Language, Nonverbal Language, Interpersonal Communications, Intrapersonal Communications (with an emphasis on Listening skills).

The basic course is team taught with two classes of 24 each and two instructors teaching units in a single block of time. Classes meet in the groups of 24 about one-half of the quarter, and in groups of 48 the rest of the time. The course is a five-credit hour class meeting five times a week for 10 or 11 weeks. The entire approach of the course is pragmatic. All classes are taught by speech majors who have a minimum of a Masters degree. Each new instructor is teamed with an experienced faculty member for the first quarter they teach. There are weekly meetings of the entire basic course faculty and daily team meetings. All members of the basic course faculty participate in making up the syllabus (workbook) which is used by all instructors. Duplicate course calendars are made up. Students are allowed to attend the section of another instructor if they miss their regular class.

In addition, since some of the students are on "swing shifts", which require them to switch from day to evening classes, they may come to day or evening sessions.

The department (program) head coordinates, with no release time or pay. He coordinates the activities, recommends part-time instructors, makes sure that teaching tools and supplies are available, assists with scheduling, and schedules audio visual materials. This is a non-official position.

A common syllabus (workbook) is sold to the students in the book store and is adjusted quarterly to reflect the faculty and student evaluations of the course.

The class consists of activities for one-half of the time, lectures one-quarter, and discussion for one-quarter. The procedure used is experiential in nature using activities from COMMUNICATING: A SOCIAL AND CAREER FOCUS by Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin. Each unit starts with an activity, followed by the students drawing conclusions about the activity, then a lecture/discussion is held, followed by an activity to show learning (tests, speech, group activity, problem solving activity).

Audio visual items used in the class include locally made video tapes as well as video tapes taken "off air" of LCCC faculty members appearing on Cleveland TV talk shows on appropriate class projects. These include: "What is Communications?" "What is Nonverbal Communications?" "Here I Stand!" "The Langugage Learning Explosion" "What Is Research?" These are supplemented by air-tapes for which permission has been obtained: "What Constitutes a Fair Fight." Other audio visual materials are "The Power of Listening" by CRM McGraw-Hill, LaGrange, Illinois, "Kinesics: Understanding Body Language" and "Proxemics: Space

and Human Perspective" by Center for the Advanced Study of Human Communications (now out of circulation) and "The Rumor Clinic" by AntiDefimation League of B'nai B'rith.

Further information about the program may be obtained by writing to: Dr. Roy M. Berko, Communication and Performing Arts, Lorain County Community College, 1005 North Abbe Road, Elyria, Ohio 44035